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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 COTONOU 000657

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W/DBANKS AND AF/RSA  
LOME FOR DCM J.A. DIFFILY  
COGARD MIO EUROPE ROTTERDAM NL FOR CDR SHAW AND LCDR KEITH  
PARIS FOR D'ELIA

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [EINV](#) [ETRD](#) [EWWT](#) [PGOV](#) [KHLs](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [BN](#)  
SUBJECT: PORT OF COTONOU: UPDATE ON DEMARCHE CONCERNING ISPS CODE  
COMPLIANCE - USCG TEAM RECOMMENDS CLEARANCE

REF: A) Cotonou 617; B) Cotonou 561; C) Cotonou 552; D) Cotonou 389;  
E) State 59359

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Based on an August 21, 2007 inspection of the Port of Cotonou, U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Commander Adam Shaw and Lt. Commander Robert Keith, presented to the Government of Benin (GOB) on August 22 a USCG Headquarters cleared-document stating their recommendation for a USCG determination that the Port of Cotonou has met the minimum International Ship and Port Facility (ISPS) requirements set forth in the May 21 demarche delivered to the GOB by the Ambassador (Ref D). Assuming USCG headquarters concurrence, this would mean that the Port of Cotonou will not/not be placed on the ISPS security watch list. Details and text of the document follow below. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) BACKGROUND. On May 21, 2007, Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown delivered a demarche, which described in detail deficiencies noted at the Port of Cotonou during an August 2006 USCG inspection and gave the GOB ninety days to address the deficiencies and meet the minimum requirements of the International Ship and Port Facility (ISPS) Code (Refs D and E). These deficiencies also had been noted during an official visit by United States Navy (USN) Vice-Admiral John D. Stufflebeem and USCG Vice-Admiral David Peterman in May (Ref C). A follow-up visit by USCG Lieutenant Commander Robert Keith on July 24 noted that little progress toward ISPS compliance had been achieved up to that point (Ref B). A follow-up visit by then-CDA Steven Lauterbach on August 10, made at the request of new GOB Minister of Transportation Armand Zinzindohoue, noted that some progress had been made, but that much remained to be done. Lauterbach affirmed that it would be the USCG, not the Embassy, which would make the final determination regarding ISPS compliance (Reftel A). END BACKGROUND.

¶3. (U) USCG Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith visited Benin August 20-22, 2007. The purpose of their visit was to determine if the Port of Cotonou had met the minimum requirements under the ISPS Code outlined in the May 21, 2007 demarche, and to report these findings, as well as a recommendation, to USCG headquarters. On August 21, the American delegation (USDEL), which consisted of Commander Shaw, Lieutenant Commander Keith, Acting Political-Economic Officer Steven Lauterbach, Millennium Challenge Corporation Benin Acting Resident Country Director Randall Wood, and

Economic Assistant Marius Lotus, visited the Port of Cotonou. Minister of Transportation Zinzindohoue led the 40-50 person GOB delegation that included Ms. Rahanaou Anki Dosso, Director of the Department of Merchant Marine and ISPS Compliance Designated Authority, Christophe Aguessy, General Director of the Port of Cotonou and others.

¶4. (U) After a brief meeting of the principals and an exchange of formalities, the August 21 working meeting began with a plenary session in the Port of Cotonou conference room. Commander Shaw explained that while Lieutenant Commander Keith had visited the port several times, this was his first visit, and asked that the GOB delegation explain in detail what steps had been taken to correct the deficiencies, broken down into six categories that had been noted in the demarche. These categories include: access control enforcement, lighting, completion of perimeter fencing, communications, division of the port into zones of access, and training of personnel. A long discussion followed, with Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith posing many questions and receiving detailed answers from the GOB delegation. The GOB delegation then took the USDEL to several classrooms, where Canadian instructors from the contract firm Sea Quest were conducting training classes for Port of Cotonou personnel. This training had begun within the last few weeks.

¶5. (U) A long tour of the entire port followed. USDEL was in two vehicles, with at least ten GOB vehicles leading and following. It was immediately apparent to USDEL that an enormous amount of improvements had been made, many since Mr. Lauterbach's August 10 visit to the port, and almost all of which had been achieved since Lieutenant Commander Keith's July 24 visit. Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith frequently exited the vehicles to closely examine improvements and, with the aid of Mr. Lotsu who served as interpreter, question workers and port personnel. They made several random checks of paperwork and identification, which in every case were found to be in proper order. At a plenary meeting following

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the tour, Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith noted that much had been accomplished, but said that they would have to make a point-by-point analysis to determine if the Port of Cotonou had met minimum ISPS requirements, and that they would report their findings the following day; i.e., August 22.

¶6. (U) After a close analysis, Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith decided to recommend that the USCG make the determination that the Port of Cotonou had met the minimum requirements set forth in the May 21 demarche. A full text of their determination follows.

BEGIN TEXT.

U.S. Coast Guard Out-Brief August 21 2007 Benin

Following a visit to the Port of Cotonou on August 21 07 by Commander Adam Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Robert Keith, the US Delegation noted that the Port has made substantial improvements and will recommend that the United States Coast Guard make the determination that the country of Benin has met the minimum requirements set forth in the demarche delivered to the Government of Benin by Ambassador Gayleatha B. Brown on May 21, 2007.

While the minimum requirements of the ISPS code have been met, the following recommended areas of improvement are provided to make the Autonomous Port of Cotonou more competitive:

#### Access control

- Color code badges to identify access to specific zones
- Enforce zone access
- Use shuttle buses to move workers between zones

#### Cargo Logistics and Customs Inspections

- Move the containers off-site to conduct customs inspections and to facilitate the stripping and stuffing of containers

#### Off-Site Parking

- Complete secure off-site truck parking to stimulate hinterland

traffic from Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali  
- Complete off-site parking for port personnel

Continue Enforcement of the 48-hour time limit for trucks in the port and strive to further reduce the time trucks are required to remain in the port

Continue the "train the trainer" courses and develop a drill and exercise plan

Encourage more direct involvement of the designated authority to effectively oversee implementation of the ISPS Code

Commander Adam Shaw  
U.S. Coast Guard

Lieutenant Commander Robert Keith  
U.S. Coast Guard

END TEXT OF DOCUMENT

17. (U) On August 22, the American delegation, led by the Ambassador, conducted an out-briefing for the GOB. She informed the GOB representatives that the USCG officers would recommend to USCG headquarters that a determination be made that the GOB has met the minimum requirements set forth in the May 21 demarche. Commander Shaw and Lieutenant Commander Keith provided details, careful to note that while substantial progress had been made, much remains to be done, and that the GOB must not become complacent. Lieutenant Commander Keith pointed out that if the Port of Cotonou could make so many improvements in three weeks, even more could be done in the next three months or the next three years.

18. (U) In a striking illustration of the enormous importance of this issue to the GOB, President Boni Yayi held a 45 minute evening meeting on August 22 with the entire USDEL. The Ambassador reaffirmed USG commitment to its partnership for development with Benin. Minister Zinzindohoue, accompanied by several Port officials, committed his staff to continued improvement of the Port. President Yayi expressed appreciation for on-going USG support, notably with the Port, and thanked the USCG officers for their visit, inviting them back both to assist the Port and to verify that

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additional progress was being made. He even suggested an unannounced USCG visit. President Yayi emphasized the great importance of the Port of Cotonou, describing it as the "engine of the nation's economy."

19. (U) The President stated that he was by no means satisfied with "minimum" ISPS compliance and wanted the Port of Cotonou to improve to the point such that it would be the most important and modern port in the region. He linked the port to his efforts to increase Benin's rate of economic growth and to reduce poverty. He also discussed the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) at length, emphasizing its key role in improving the Port of Cotonou and expressing the wish that these efforts be increased and accelerated.

Commander Shaw thanked the President for the warm hospitality he had enjoyed in Benin and described to the President the reciprocal visit to the United States, which he hopes to organize for GOB officials, in an effort to continue Port improvements and modernization.

110. (SBU) COMMENT: After almost two months of lackadaisical efforts to meet ISPS standards, the GOB seemingly went into full-scale panic mode after Lieutenant Commander Keith's July 24 visit and made huge improvements to the Port of Cotonou in a very short time. It is abundantly clear that the highest levels of the GOB took this demarche very seriously and that the GOB regards the Port as enormously important to the country's economy. It is also noteworthy that in recent weeks a number of personnel changes have been made at the Port of Cotonou, including the firing of both the Harbor Master and the Head of Customs at the port. These firings reflect the seriousness of the GOB's efforts to improve the Port of Cotonou as well as President Yayi's ongoing campaign against corruption. As we look to the future, it is vitally important that

the GOB not become complacent with regard to improvements at the Port of Cotonou but continue with efforts to make improvements. The American delegation made this point repeatedly, and the Embassy will continue to do so. Postscript: President Yayi personally visited the Port of Cotonou on August 23 to emphasize the need for further improvements and obtained an ID badge in compliance with the USCG recommendation. END COMMENT.

BROWN